



Samsung Galaxy S7 Teardown

Teardown of the Galaxy S7 on March 8, 2016.

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INTRODUCTION

Okay, this phone may have been cracked open a *couple* times already, but we're eager to investigate the mysterious *thermal spreader* ourselves. Will the fancy new tech in the S7 be as *cool* as it's cracked up to be? Only a teardown will tell.

Stay up to date on the latest repair news, and get a behind the scenes look at where the teardown magic happens by following us on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#).

[video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ETEGRh_p7Ng]



TOOLS:

- [iOpener](#) (1)
 - [iFixit Opening Picks set of 6](#) (1)
 - [Tweezers](#) (1)
 - [Phillips #00 Screwdriver](#) (1)
 - [Spudger](#) (1)
 - [iSclack](#) (1)
 - [Suction Handle](#) (1)
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Step 1 — Samsung Galaxy S7 Teardown



- While legend has it that the number 7 has magical qualities, there's no knowing what qualities the S7 has. If we were to guess completely at random:
 - 5.1-inch Super AMOLED display with 2560 × 1440 resolution (576 ppi)
 - Qualcomm Snapdragon 820 processor with 4 GB RAM + Adreno 530 GPU
 - 12-megapixel rear camera with dual pixel autofocus, 4K video capture; 5-megapixel selfie camera
 - 32 or 64 GB internal storage, expandable via MicroSD card (up to 200 GB additional)
 - IP68 water resistance rating
 - Android 6.0 Marshmallow
- ⓘ Since the S7 has never been seen on the internet before, there's no way to know if these educated guesses are right.

Step 2



- Compared with its predecessor, the Galaxy S6, the all-new S7 is... uhhhh...
 - Sorry—which one's the S7 again? We have to flip them over to double-check.
- That's better. Unlike its predecessor, the S7's back panel curves gently on the sides, making it a more grabbable handset.
- ⓘ The S7 also shaves off roughly a millimeter from the S6's length and width, while packing on nearly a full extra mm in thickness. That said, at 7.9 mm, it's plenty thin—and even sports a reduced camera bump.
- After [tearing down the S6](#), we weren't exactly wowed by its glass-on-glue construction; it scored a 4 out of 10 and a big "meh" in the repairability department. Here's hoping that, appearances notwithstanding, the S7 will fare better...

Step 3



- Interestingly, Samsung chose to stay with a run-of-the-mill micro USB port, instead of the new USB Type-C standard.
 - ⓘ Many new flagship phones (Nexus 6P, LG G5, OnePlus 2) feature Type-C, though few fully utilize the power of the connector.
- For now, Samsung seems to think that the older, more widely compatible standard is good enough.
 - ✦ Or, they just thought it would be awkward if all those [free](#) Gear VR headsets weren't compatible with the phones they shipped with.
- Samsung has also made upgrading to a new phone incredibly easy, with an included USB adapter. It's almost like they expect you to buy a new phone before your current device is completely worn out beyond repair. Weird.

Step 4



- With no exterior screws to be found, there can only be one form of dark matter holding this Galaxy together. Yep, that'd be glue.
 - Fortunately, it's nothing a hot [iOpener](#) can't handle.
- We love any excuse to break out our trusty twin-suction-cupped [iSlack](#) tool, and the S7's front and rear glass panels make it a perfect target.
- With the rear glass lifted by a smidge, we attack with an opening pick and slice apart the adhesive.
- All in all, it's [the same drill as last time](#)—with maybe a slight increase in stickiness.

Step 5



- Where last year we found [gooey white adhesive](#), we now find gooey *black* adhesive. Possibly it was reformulated for waterproofing purposes—or, it could just be a matter of better color-matching.
- Removing the back cover hasn't given us access to anything useful—just a smooth surface for the glass to stick to.
- Fortunately, part of that surface consists of screws.

Step 6



- Actually, that smooth surface contains some useful bits, like the S7's antennas...
- ...and its speaker...
- ...[and MY axe](#).

✦ We'd rather see a user-replaceable battery, or at least an accessible connector for one, but these days we're not expecting much from Samsung. Its once-lofty repairability scores have [fallen hard](#) from the heady days of the Galaxy S4.

Step 7



- We line up the pieces for a closer look at the individual components, including the wireless charging coil.
- ① Last year's Galaxy flagship had a single [midframe](#) with a handful of aggressively adhered parts, so this separation is a welcome change in our book.
- All these modular components connect to the motherboard by way of tiny spring contacts, making removal and replacement a snap—once you've muscled your way past all the glue and glass, anyway.

Step 8



- Samsung got some flak from consumers for reducing battery capacity in [last year's S6](#). It seems they took the hint and made up for it by including this 3000 mAh battery in the S7.
 - ⓘ That's a significant boost over the Galaxy S6's 2550 mAh battery, and it even beats the much larger [iPhone 6s Plus](#)'s 2750 mAh powerplant.
 - ⚠ Sadly, as evidenced by this important warning label, the S7's battery does not work in the presence of puppies.
- Although the battery upgrade means more time to binge on apps and games, the battery itself is well wedged and adhered in place, making extraction a little tough.
- If it wasn't designed to be readily removed, then it wasn't intended to be repaired or replaced. Boo.

Step 9



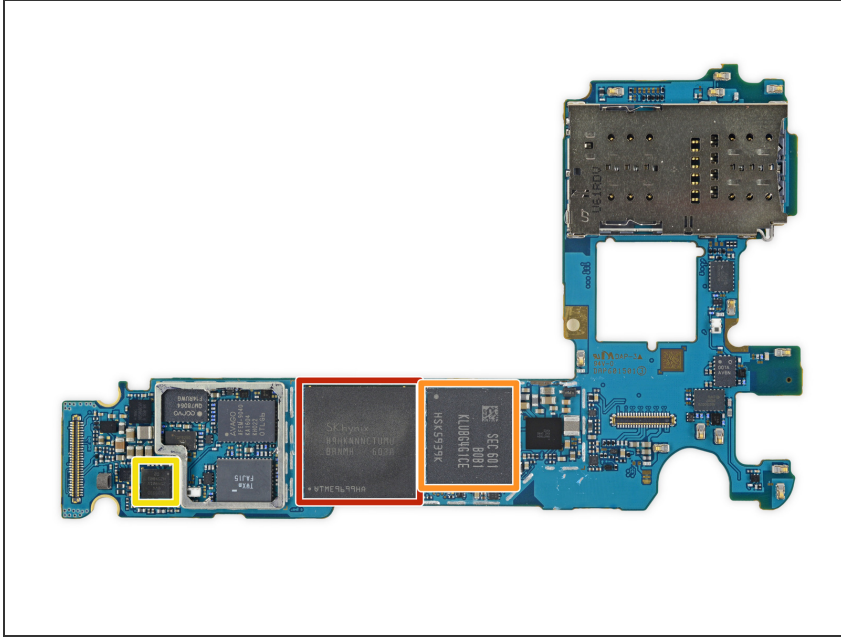
- Working our way to the motherboard, we pluck out a 5-megapixel front-facing camera.
- Unfortunately, you'll have to work almost as hard to get flawless selfies on the S7 as you did on the S6. The only front-facing camera upgrade here is the shiny new $f/1.7$ aperture.
- With the front camera out of the way, we lift up the motherboard and find a [familiar daughterboard connector](#) on its underside.

Step 10



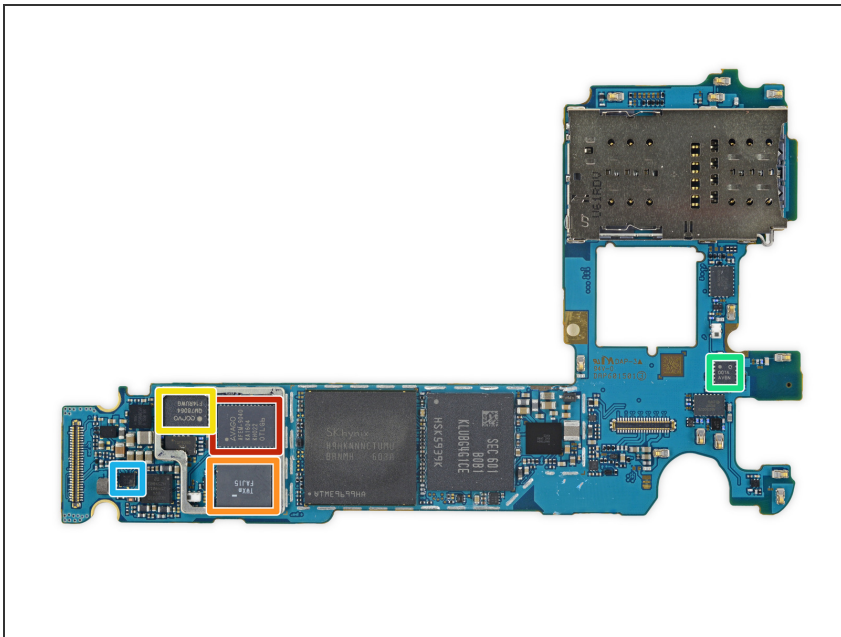
- Compared to the 16-megapixel rear camera on the S6, it seems the S7 got a downgrade with a 12-megapixel/4K rear camera .
- ⓘ However, the sensor in the S7 sports Dual Pixel autofocus technology (a.k.a. [phase detection](#)) for every pixel.
- Additionally, these pixels measure in at 1.4 μm —a full 25% increase from last year's model—which will reduce noise and improve overall image quality.
- So, despite having fewer pixels, even photos taken in the worst lighting should come out clearer in a head-to-head comparison.

Step 11



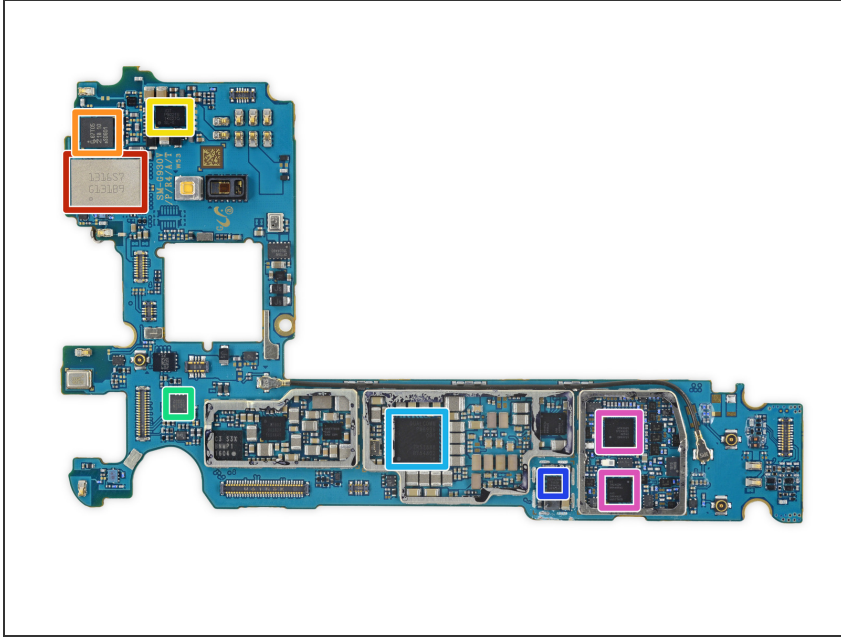
- Our friends at [Chipworks](#) may have beaten us to the punch, but that doesn't stop us from giving this board our due diligence. Squirreled away under the EMI shields, we find:
 - SK Hynix [H9KNNNCTUMU-BRNMH](#) 4 GB LPDDR4 SDRAM layered over the Qualcomm [MSM8996](#) Snapdragon 820
 - Samsung [KLUBG4G1CE](#) 32 GB MLC Universal Flash Storage 2.0
 - Qualcomm WCD9335 Audio Codec

Step 12



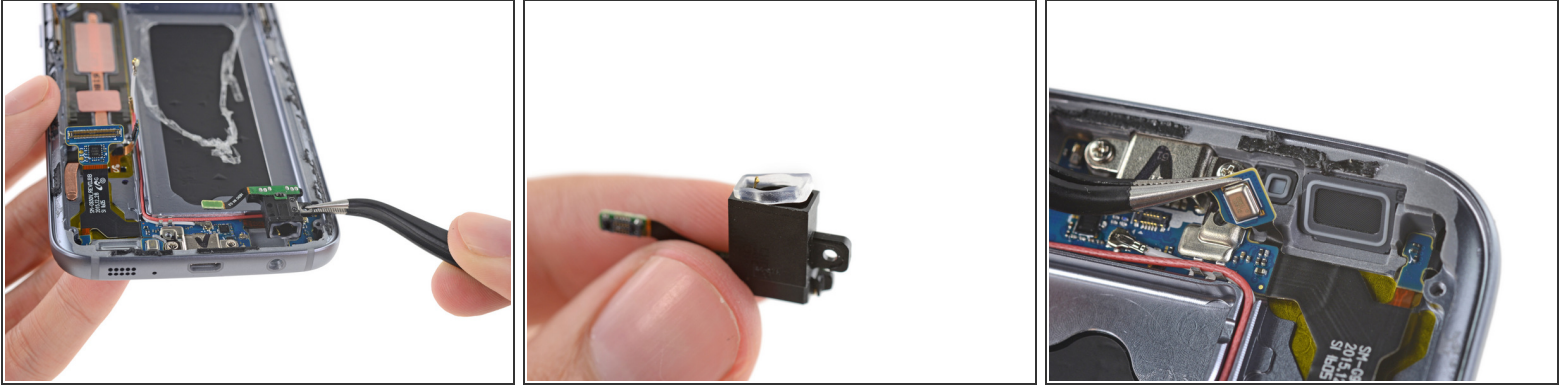
- And some more:
 - Avago AFEM-9040 Multiband Multimode Module
 - Murata FAJ15 Front End Module
 - Qorvo [QM78064](#) High Band RF Fusion Module
 - Qorvo [QM63001A](#) Diversity Receive Module
 - DSP [DBMD4](#) Audio/Voice Processor

Step 13



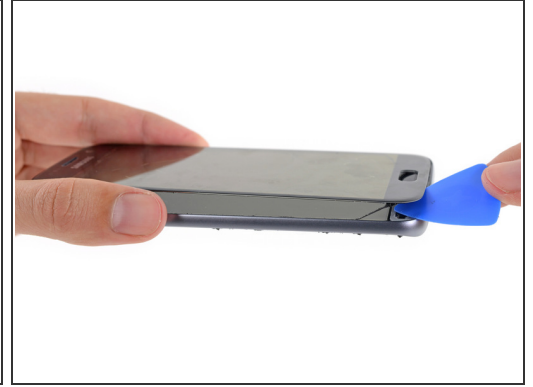
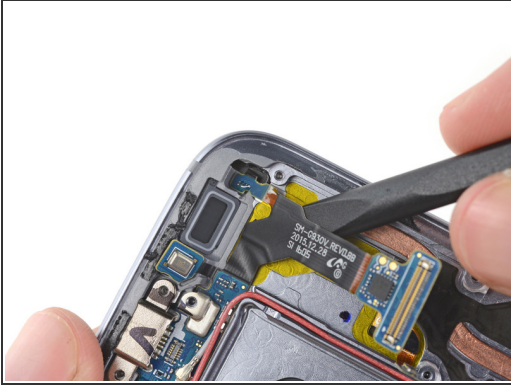
- And on the flip side...
- Samsung 1316S7 Wi-Fi Module
- NXP 67T05 NFC Controller
- IDT P9221 Wireless Power Receiver (likely an iteration of IDT [P9220](#))
- STMicroelectronics [LSM6DS3](#) always-on 6-Axis IMU
- Qualcomm PM8996 PMIC
- Qualcomm [QFE3100](#) Envelope Tracker
- Qualcomm [WTR4905](#) and [WTR3925](#) RF Transceivers

Step 14



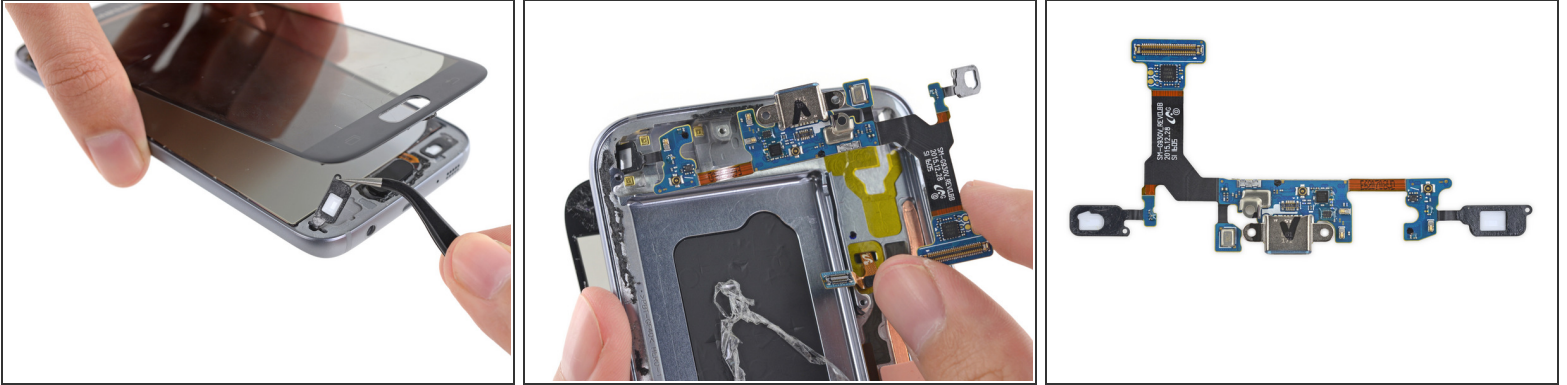
- Next up is the S7's modular headphone jack.
 - Complete with cute rubber seal!
- Looks like Samsung decided to take its ruggedized "Sport" standards to their flagship, with a hefty IP68 rating (the highest level being IP69).
 - ❗ Perhaps responding to a certain fruit company's recent [waterproofing efforts](#)?
- We find more rubber seals around the lower microphone and speaker making for some serious [ingress protection](#).

Step 15



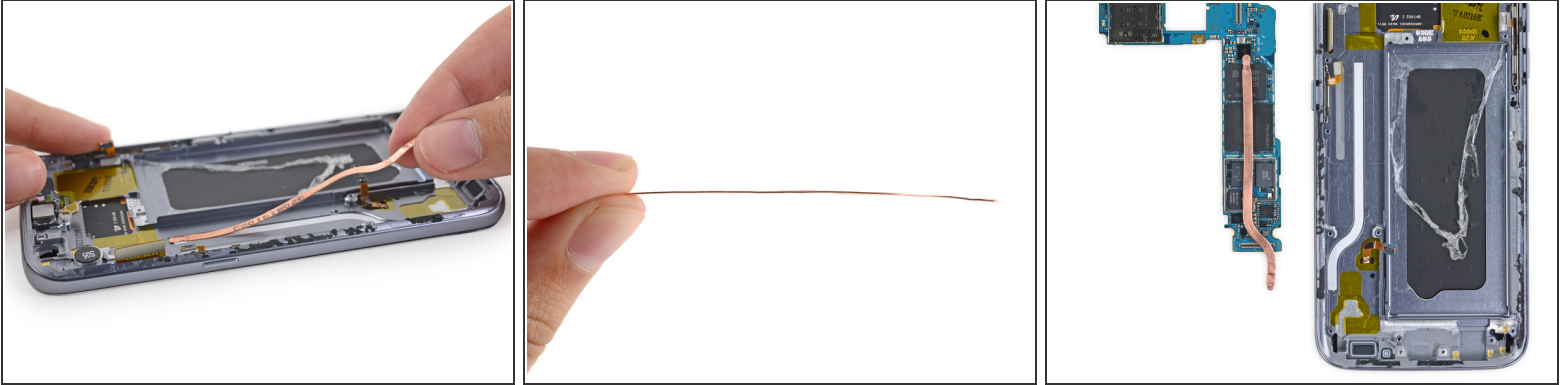
- Just like its [predecessor](#), the cables for the S7's soft buttons are wrapped around the display-backing frame.
- These sandwiched cables make a daughterboard replacement (including the charging port) next to impossible, since freeing these cables means removing the OLED screen.
- Undaunted, we bring back our iOpener to ease the ~~tension~~ adhesive.
- While we're at it, we grab a trusty opening pick and set to work on the terrible task of prying open the OLED.

Step 16



- Peeling up those pesky soft button LED cables lets us *finally* free the daughterboard.
- Just for those of you keeping score, this messy situation prevents easy replacement of: display and digitizer (of course), USB port, microphone, and soft button LEDs.
- ☑ If you need to replace the charging port, unless you have some microsoldering skills, you have two options: sacrifice those soft button LEDs or replace your display in the process.
- ⓘ Remember that fake "midframe" made of antennas? Turns out the S7 just buried its midframe deeper, and adhered the display to it, rather than secure its [display assembly to a midframe](#) with screws.
- This beefs up the S7's waterproofness, but means more of a fight to repair the thing should you suffer non-water related troubles.

Step 17



- Alright, the moment we've all been waiting for: the legendary "[liquid cooling](#)" system in the S7.
- It's a tiny copper twig.
 - ❗ Actually, it's a *teeny* [heat pipe](#) (thin copper tube) with less than half a gram of material, measuring less than half a millimeter thick.
- This may not be as revolutionary [as Samsung describes it](#), but most heat pipes *do* technically use liquid to transfer heat.
- In the case of the S7, we're guessing that the pipe transfers heat to the phone's metal midframe, where it can then radiate out to the side—*or directly into your hands*.
- We've seen heat pipes in phones before, but the growing need for them shows how phone processors are getting faster (and sometimes hotter) each year.

Step 18



REPAIRABILITY SCORE:



- Samsung Galaxy S7 Repairability Score: **3 out of 10** (10 is easiest to repair).
 - Many components are modular and can be replaced independently.
 - Unlike the S6 Edge, the battery can be removed without first ousting the motherboard—but tough adhesive and a glued-on rear panel make replacement more difficult than necessary.
 - The display needs to be removed (and likely destroyed) if you want to replace the USB port.
 - Front and back glass make for double the crackability, and strong adhesive on the rear glass makes it very difficult to gain entry into the device.
 - Replacing the glass without destroying the display is probably impossible.

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